

VZCZCXYZ0006
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNY #0140/01 0630755
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 040755Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7394
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 0069

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 000140

SIPDIS

FOR DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2019
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [TX](#) [NO](#)
SUBJECT: FAMILY OF TURKMEN POLITICAL PRISONER REQUESTS USG
HELP

Classified By: Political Counselor Kristen Bauer for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The family of jailed Turkmen civil rights activist Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, living in Norway, has contacted the Norwegian Helsinki Committee and requested that the US Embassy in Turkmenistan do what it can to determine his welfare and lobby for his release. Actions by the Norwegian MFA have been limited to contact with the OSCE in Vienna and Ashgabat. End Summary.

12. (C) Poloff contacted Norwegian Helsinki Committee official Berit Lindeman and confirmed the information in paragraphs 3-6 below about Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, which had been passed on to poloff by Embassy Ashgabat. Paragraph 7 details the GON's actions on this case.

History of the Annaniyazov Case

13. (C) In June 2008, Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, a former civil rights activist who had been in exile in Norway (having received refugee status here in 2002), decided to return to Turkmenistan. Within a day of his return, he was arrested, and he was sentenced in September 2008 to 11 years of prison for an undetermined set of charges. The court trial was closed. Embassy Ashgabat contacted a Norwegian Helsinki Commission representative who is in touch with the activist's wife, Amantash, who lives in Norway. The information below largely came from her.

14. (C) After his arrest in late June, Annaniyazov was initially charged with illegal border crossing, and this was the charge the family was aware of. However, when his trial took place in July it was closed, and the family believes additional charges were levied against him. The additional charges were what led to the extraordinarily long jail term he got of 11 years. The family is aware of a narcotics-related charge the authorities levied against Annaniyazov in 2001, but they do not know if a related conviction led to his current sentence. Annaniyazov's sister, who lives in Turkmenistan, was visited by a former prisoner who said Annaniyazov was serving his sentence at the prison in Turkmenbashi, where he had been held from 1995-1998 (for organizing a demonstration against the government). He had contracted tuberculosis at the prison at that time, and was later treated for it in Norway. His current health status is unknown. He is being held incommunicado.

15. (C) The family in Norway does not understand why Annaniyazov chose to return to Turkmenistan, and they tried to dissuade him. He had attempted to return once before, in 2007, but failed. He told them that Turkmenistan was important to him and he wanted to help with ongoing reforms there, and he had also indicated that he wanted to start up an anti-drug project in the country. He may have naively misjudged the risk. According to rumors circulating in the

Turkmen exile community, Turkmen embassy officials in Kazakhstan told him that "everything would be arranged for him" and it was safe to cross the border with his Norwegian refugee passport. There are no indications that Annaniyazov was actively engaged in any activism in Norway, although he maintained contact with a variety of Turkmen exiles. He tried to establish his own NGO at one point that would focus on Turkmenistan-related projects, but he could not raise funds to get the organization off the ground.

16. (C) Family members abroad are very worried about family members still in Turkmenistan. Annaniyazov,s daughter, Jasgul and her family were prepared last fall to go to Norway as part of an IOM assistance program, but they were barred from departing the country. Annaniyazov,s sister, Gulnara, was the family representative outside the closed court room, and she has been fired from her job. The cell phones of Annaniyazov,s brother, Charygeldy, and the phone of his friend Mikhail, were turned off. Family members, while welcoming international support in freeing Annaniyazov, are afraid that publicity will defeat their goal. Annaniyazov,s wife would much appreciate any assistance the US Embassy can provide in advocating for Gulgeldy Annaniyazov,s release, and also for assistance it can provide in persuading the Turkmen government to allow Annaniyazov,s daughter, Jasgul and her family to depart the country. The Norwegian Helsinki Commission representative indicated that her organization is asking the Norwegian MFA to get involved as well, since Annaniyazov held a Norwegian refugee passport. Ms. Lindeman indicated that the legal issues are tricky, as Mr. Annaniyazov lost his refugee status when he left Norway and went back to Turkmenistan.
GON Actions

17. (C) Poloff contacted Ole Bjornoy, desk officer for Turkmenistan in the Norwegian MFA, to understand what Norway has done with regard to the case. Bjornoy said that the GON has raised the case with the OSCE in both Vienna and Ashgabat. He further said that "there is a new head of mission of the OSCE in Ashgabat and they are waiting to be contacted by family members in Turkmenistan to get a clearer picture of the situation." When poloff stated that it was our understanding that the family in Turkmenistan specifically did not want any obvious involvement in the case, Bjornoy said that "after the daughter (Jasgul) was contacted by the Turkmen security authorities, the family's attitude changed." The Norwegian immigration authorities have contacted Annaniyazov's family remaining in Norway about family reunification procedures under Norwegian law. According to Bjornoy, the Norwegian Ambassador to Turkmenistan was in Ashgabat last week on an education-related trip, and was unable to meet with the OSCE mission. There are no current GON plans to meet with the Turkmen government directly on this case.
JOHNSON